UNITED NATIONS

EP

Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.18/17
16 March 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Eighteenth session
Nairobi, 15-26 May 1995
Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

POLICY ISSUES: COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS

The Climate Agenda - international climate-related programmes

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The attached executive summary of a proposal for an integrating framework entitled "Climate Agenda" presented jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the World Maritime Organization (WMO) for international climate-related programmes. The integrating framework was prepared in accordance with Governing Council decision 17/24 of 21 May 1993, part C "Intergovernmental Meeting on the World Climate Programme". The entire proposal itself comprises an executive summary; a policy makers summary; the climate agenda; and an overview of current international climate-related programmes and of national climate activities. The complete set of reports is being made available to all Governments and is to be presented to the governing bodies of the six international bodies that implement the World Climate Programme. As recommended by the Intergovernmental Meeting on the World Climate Programme (14-16 April 1993), the preparation of the Climate Agenda was the responsibility of the Coordinating Committee for the World Climate Programme (CCWCP) with the advice of an Advisory Panel drawn from the executive boards or councils of the international organizations concerned. In the case of the Governing Council of UNEP, representatives of Japan, Nigeria, the United States of America and Venezuela were represented on the Advisory Panel. CCWCP met four times and the Advisory Panel twice. The report was prepared with the assistance of Smith System Engineering Ltd. of the United Kingdom.

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

290395

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Note the availability of the Climate Agenda: A proposal for an Integrating Framework for International Climate-related Programmes, which encompasses all the climate-related activities of international organizations;

(b) Note also that the Agenda is focused upon the needs of Governments and is designed to ensure maximum synergy;

(c) Recognize that the overall aims and priority areas developed along the four thrusts identified by the Intergovernmental Meeting on the World Climate Programme will only be attained through the participation of all nations. This requires capacity-building in developing countries and those with economies in transition, realized through training and development, improved institutional arrangements and technology transfer;

(d) Be aware of the concerns of the Executive Committee of the World Meteorological Organization, which, at its forty-sixth session in June 1994, inter alia was dismayed by the information regarding the reduced financial allocation to the Atmosphere subprogramme of UNEP by its Governing Council. The decision to reduce and, in some cases, to remove UNEP support from climate-related activities, traditionally addressed jointly by UNEP and WMO, was also noted with concern. Further concern was expressed that UNEP, as a partner with WMO in the World Climate Programme, would not fulfil its responsibilities within that partnership, particularly in view of the importance of the issues addressed;

(e) Endorse the proposal that UNEP be responsible for coordinating international activities under Thrust 3 of the Climate Agenda "Studies of climate impact assessments and response strategies to reduce vulnerabilities", with guidance from the Scientific Advisory Committee for the World Climate Impact Assessment and Response Strategies Programme (WCIRP);

(f) Take note of and respond to the implications of the climate agenda and, in particular:

Request international organizations to:

(i) Align their climate-related activities according to the priorities of the Agenda and implement these to the extent that resources permit;

(ii) Provide, on a programme basis, a clear set of results and associated outputs in accordance with modern management practices, against which progress can be judged and against which periodic independent reviews may be carried out;

(iii) Establish the Coordinating Committee for the World Climate Programme (CCWCP) as a formal inter-agency committee, whose tasks will include, inter alia, the ongoing determination of priorities, the seeking of resources for implementation, the review and coordination of activities and continuous monitoring of progress towards achievement of the aims of the Agenda;

Request Governments to:

(i) Undertake those parts of the programmes for which they have the required expertise and capacity;

(ii) Strengthen or, where they do not already exist, establish national climate programmes or programmes with similar responsibilities;

(iv) Cooperate in building the scientific and technical capacity of developing countries and those with economies in transition in order to enable their full participation in the Agenda;

(v) Provide a modest amount of additional resources to international organizations for the targeted purpose of coordinating the implementation of the Climate Agenda and for the overall management of the programmes, through the inter-agency coordinating committee and management of the individual thrusts.

ANNEX

THE CLIMATE AGENDA

INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE-RELATED PROGRAMMES

A Proposal for an Integrating Framework

by

FAO, ICSU, UNEP, UNESCO and its IOC, WMO

(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

Governments have obligations to ensure the successful implementation of international agreements on climate-related issues and responsibilities to their national climate-sensitive sectors. These require governments to formulate and implement policies and strategies to deal with climate variability and potential anthropogenic climate change and to devise means to achieve sustainable development.

International climate-related programmes enable nations to address shared goals, in a cost-effective manner, through the pursuit of national activities within an agreed international framework and to benefit from the worldwide effort. These programmes have already provided scientific understanding, technology and data needed for assessments, such as those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and to inform policies for sustainable development, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The development of policies and strategies to satisfy these new and emerging obligations requires an enhanced understanding of the climate system and its interaction with human activities and a much wider application of this knowledge, as set out in this Climate Agenda.

The Climate Agenda can be fully implemented within the existing structure of international climate-related programmes if:

International organizations sponsoring climate-related programmes:

- *strengthen and extend existing international programmes according to the priorities of this Agenda;*
- *introduce management practices which monitor outputs against agreed performance standards;*
- *ensure better planning and coordination by establishing an inter-agency coordination mechanism; and*

Governments:

- *increase support to national activities, as part of international programmes which they have helped to design;*
- *strengthen or establish, as appropriate, national climate programmes, or programmes with similar responsibilities;*
- *build scientific and technical capacity in developing nations and nations with economies in transition;*
- *fund international planning and coordination mechanisms;*
- *take decisions in response to the Climate Agenda at meetings of the governing bodies of the international organizations involved in the Agenda.*

All nations are affected by climate. It is a resource that shapes society and implicates many economic sectors. Natural climate variability, especially extreme events such as drought and resulting famine, can have catastrophic consequences for nations and their populations. In addition, possible human-induced climate change has the potential to be extremely costly, in financial, human and ecological terms. Understanding of the climate system enables nations to increase their resilience to these events and benefits their climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and fisheries.

Governments have commitments to ensure the successful implementation of international agreements on climate-related issues. These commitments were triggered, mainly, by concerns about human-induced climate change, its potential adverse impacts and its relationship to the goal of sustainable development.

One of these international agreements, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), has as its overall objective "*.. stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.*"

The required level of stabilization cannot be determined without further research and systematic observation to improve understanding of the effects of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases on the climate, and of the impacts of such effects with regard to, for example, ecosystems, sea-level rise, agricultural production and economic development. The associated time frame implies that this work needs to be undertaken without delay.

The task of understanding the climate system is too large for any one nation or indeed international organization, to address in isolation. As a result, to address the needs of Governments, the World Climate Programme was established following the First World Climate Conference. It identified shared goals and adopted an implementation strategy based upon coordinated voluntary contributions of nations within an international framework. Work carried out under the World Climate Programme and other international climate-related programmes formed the basis of the assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and informed the negotiation of the FCCC and other international agreements aimed at sustainable development.

Although the climate system is global in nature and many decisions related to it are best dealt with through international agreement, nations must also take decisions on a local and regional basis. Efforts are underway to determine how climate data and understanding can be turned into useful products for application in different sectors of society, and to increase preparedness for both natural and human-induced climate hazards.

Achievements to date

Recognizing that the obligations arising from international agreements and national needs for social and economic development place increased demands on international climate-related programmes, governments at the Intergovernmental Meeting on the World Climate Programme (IGM-WCP), held in Geneva in April 1993, reviewed the ability of these programmes to respond to these challenges. They concluded that achievements to date have been significant, for example:

- ***Research*** *into the basic processes of the climate system and simulations of climate has resulted in improved understanding of the climate system. Numerical models have reproduced some key features of global climate change over the past 150 years and hence provide increased confidence in predictions of the future climate. In addition, experimental seasonal forecasts are now available which have allowed governments in some tropical regions to anticipate and alleviate adverse climatic effects on their economies and populations.*

- ***Observations*** *of the climate system, made by operational and research systems, provide basic data of fundamental importance. As a result of international coordination of these nationally-funded observation systems, a number of high-quality, multi-disciplinary, global datasets are now available for use in understanding the global climate system and these provide the initial basis for detection of potential anthropogenic climate change.*

- ***Application*** *of climate data, primarily from historical data banks and current weather and climate observations has enabled nations to make informed decisions in climate-sensitive sectors of their economies. For example, early warning systems that continuously monitor environmental conditions in order to evaluate their impact on food crops have been developed and deployed in Africa, Asia and Latin-America.*

- ***Impacts*** *of climate have been studied on a country basis, employing methodologies agreed upon at an international level. These studies have assisted governments in the identification and implementation of suitable policy options and response measures to mitigate adverse effects of climate variability and change. The FCCC requires that Parties carry out and report country studies and the pioneering work already carried out will be invaluable to countries in discharging their obligations under the FCCC and in determining how they might respond to future climate change.*

Governments, at the IGM-WCP, concluded that while a substantial amount had already been achieved, these new and evolving requirements would only be met through a greater integration and improved prioritization of the climate-related programmes of the involved international organizations. The remainder of this document describes the response of these organizations to the IGM-WCP.

The Climate Agenda: A Proposal for an Integrating Framework for International Climate-Related Programmes

The Climate Agenda encompasses all the climate-related activities of international organizations*. It is focused upon the needs of governments and is designed to ensure maximum synergy.

This Agenda, whose overall aims and priority areas are shown in the tables below, will be developed along four main thrusts:

1 **New frontiers in climate science and prediction**

Aim: the ability to simulate past, present and future climates, including the influence of human activity, at those spatial and temporal scales of interest to governments.

Priority areas

- Enhanced understanding of the physical processes within the climate system, in particular the transfer of heat, radiation and water within the atmosphere and at the Earth's surface and the transport of heat and salinity by the oceans.

- Enhanced understanding of the biogeochemical processes in the climate system and their incorporation into climate models.

- The development and implementation of the next generation of research observational systems to support the above initiatives.

---

* These comprise those organizations which implement major climate-related programmes, namely the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the non-governmental International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which acts primarily as a funding agency; and others such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the non-governmental International Social Science Council (ISSC) which operate climate-related programmes.

- Closer collaboration between social and natural sciences in order to investigate human influences on the climate system.

2 Climate services for sustainable development

Aim: the introduction, on an operational basis, of information and predictions on climate, climate change and climate variability into socio-economic decision-making on a world wide basis.

Priority areas

- Transfer of research methodologies for climate prediction into operational climate prediction services.

- Establishment and maintenance of a network of National and Regional Climate Centres to provide and promote climate services and disseminate products - with appropriate safeguards and consideration given to the commercial sensitivities of any of the climate products which countries deem necessary or desirable.

- Further research into the applications of climate data and products in order to make best use of new analyses and forecasts.

3 Studies of climate impact assessments and response strategies to reduce vulnerabilities

Aim: to identify the means by which nations could reduce their vulnerability to climate, climate variability and both natural and anthropogenic climate change.

Priority areas

- Provision of assistance to developing countries, and countries with economies in transition, to reduce their vulnerability to climate and increase their national capability to prepare for and adapt to climate variability and change as global partners in implementing the FCCC.

- Substantial mobilization of expertise from the social and economic sectors to assist nations in developing mitigation and response strategies.

4 Dedicated observations of the climate system

Aim: to provide on an operational basis systematic climate observations for climate system monitoring, including response and impacts; climate change detection; and research, modelling and prediction.

Priority areas

- Comprehensive observations of climate parameters for early detection and documentation of climate change, its regional distribution, timing and ecosystem impact; initialization and validation of models for seasonal to interannual prediction; and to support the objectives of the other Thrusts of the Climate Agenda.

- Enhancement of existing observing networks.

- Continuation of stations with long observational records (eg part of a Global Climate Reference Network).

- Close coordination, during design and implementation phases, between the observing systems being planned for the different components of the climate system to ensure that climate requirements are met.

- Development of mechanisms which allow nations to implement and maintain the global climate observing system.

These aims will only be attained through the participation of all nations. This requires capacity-building in developing countries and those with economies in transition, realized through training and development, improved institutional arrangements and technology transfer.

Implications of the Climate Agenda

The Climate Agenda has implications for both international organizations and governments. Its successful implementation requires actions and commitments from each.

I For International Organizations

International organizations will:

- Align their climate-related activities according to the priorities of this Agenda and implement these to the extent that resources permit.

- Provide a clear set of results and associated outputs, by project, in accordance with modern management practices, against which progress can be judged and against which periodic independent reviews may be carried out.

- Establish a formal inter-agency committee, whose tasks will include, *inter alia*, the on-going identification of priorities, resource requirements and the means by which these are to be obtained, the review and planning and coordination of activities and continuous monitoring of progress towards achievement of the aims of this Agenda.

II For Governments

The implementation of the Climate Agenda requires concrete actions and financial commitments from governments and other national and regional bodies. In particular, delivery of results within a time-frame that is useful for governments requires:

- Governments to undertake those parts of the programmes for which they have the required expertise and capacity. All nations can and should participate.

- Strengthening, or establishment where they do not already exist, of national climate programmes, or programmes with similar responsibilities. Such programmes are essential in the light of the multi-disciplinary and multi-agency nature of climate-related activities and help to ensure that a nationally coordinated and consistent approach to international programmes is taken and thus facilitate decision-making both nationally and internationally.

- Governments of developed countries to cooperate in building the scientific and technical capacity of developing countries and those with economies in transition in order to enable their full participation in this Agenda. Building the capacity of developing nations to contribute to international programmes benefits all nations through enhanced information on, and understanding of, the climate system.

- Provision of a modest amount of additional resources to the international organizations involved in the Climate Agenda for the targeted purpose of coordinating the implementation of the Agenda. Additional resources are required for overall planning and coordination of the programmes, through the inter-agency committee as described above, and planning and coordination of the individual Thrusts. The amounts are relatively small

compared to the costs of the programmes themselves, typically 1% or less, but their provision will ensure that the programmes are implemented efficiently and effectively. It is estimated that an additional US $5 million per year is required.

Decisions to be taken by the governing bodies of the international organizations responsible for the implementation of this proposal.